

CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A method for building a catalog, comprising:

receiving a plurality of documents from sellers, each document including information about at least one product or service (hereinafter "item") offered for sale and a business rule governing sale of the item;

5 generating a catalog containing at least a group of said documents; wherein a document from the plurality of documents received from the sellers is included in the catalog if at least a portion of the information or the business rule meets a predetermined criterion; and

10 distributing the catalog to a plurality of buyers.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein at least one of the plurality of documents from the sellers is an XML document and the information and the business rule of the item are identified by XML tags.

15 3. The method of claim 1, wherein said generating the catalog comprises creating an online catalog received by the buyers via a network.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein said creating the online catalog comprises applying a template to at least the document.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein said generating the catalog comprises:

creating an electronic catalog from the group of documents; and

20 saving the electronic catalog on computer disks distributed to the plurality of buyers.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein said creating comprises applying a template to at least the document.

25 7. The method of claim 1, wherein said generating the catalog comprises creating a paper catalog.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein said creating comprises applying a template to at least the document.
9. The method of claim 1, further comprising sending a computer program for authoring the document to a seller.
- 5 10. The method of claim 1, further comprising sending another document from the plurality of documents to another party for inclusion in another catalog.
11. The method of claim 1, further comprising adding additional information or adding an additional rule prior to generating the catalog.
- 10 12. The method of claim 11, wherein the additional information includes an identifier of a cross-promoted item.
13. The method of claim 11, wherein the additional information includes additional description of the item.
14. The method of claim 1, wherein the business rule includes a method for determining a discount.
- 15 15. The method of claim 1, wherein the business rule includes at least one identifier of a component of the item.
16. The method of claim 15, wherein the document further includes additional information about the component and an additional business rule governing the sale of the component.
- 20 17. The method of claim 1, wherein the business rule includes an identifier of the seller.
18. The method of claim 1, wherein the business rule includes a date on which the seller created the first document.
- 25 19. The method of claim 11, wherein the additional rule includes an identifier of a party that received the document.

20. The method of claim 11, wherein the additional rule further includes a date on which a party received the document.
21. The method of claim 1, further comprising receiving payment from a seller when a buyer purchases an item from the catalog.
- 5 22. The method of claim 10, further comprising receiving payment from a seller when a buyer purchases an item described by said another document from said another catalog.
23. The method of claim 1, wherein said generating the catalog includes creating legally binding offers with words of commitment to sell and specific terms from the business rule.
- 10 24. The method of Claim 1 wherein each document in said group describes an identical item offered for sale by a plurality of sellers.
25. A storage medium encoded with:
  - descriptive information about an item for sale; and
  - business rules governing the sale of the item, the business rules including identifiers of each party that has included the descriptive information and the business rule in a catalog distributed to buyers.
- 15 26. The medium of claim 25, wherein the descriptive information is identified by XML tags.
27. The medium of claim 25, wherein the business rules are identified by XML tags.
- 20 28. The medium of claim 25, wherein the business rules further include the dates on which said each party received the descriptive information and the business rules.
29. The medium of claim 25, wherein the business rules further include an identifier of the party that created the descriptive information and the business rules.
30. The medium of claim 29, wherein the business rules further include the date on 25 which the descriptive information and the business rules are created.

31. The medium of claim 25, wherein the business rules further include discount methods for the item.

32. A system for generating a catalog, the system comprising:

5 a first computer including a computer program for authoring a first document comprising information descriptive of a first item and a business rule for sale of the first item;

a second computer coupled to the first computer via a network, the second computer including:

the first document received from the first computer; and

10 an online catalog including at least the information included in the first document; and

a third computer coupled to the second computer via the network, the third computer including a browser for accessing the online catalog in the second computer.

15 33. The system of claim 32, wherein the first document is an XML document and the information and the business rule are identified by XML tags.

34. The system of claim 32, further comprising a fourth computer coupled to the second computer via the network, the fourth computer including a computer program for authoring a second document comprising information descriptive of a second item and a business rule for sale of the second item.

20 35. The system of claim 34, wherein the second computer further includes the second document received from the fourth computer and the online catalog includes at least a portion of the second document.

36. The system of claim 32, further comprising a fourth computer coupled to the second computer via the network, the fourth computer including:

the first document received from the second computer; and

another online catalog including at least a portion of the first document.

37. A system for generating a catalog, the system comprising:

first means for authoring a first document comprising information descriptive of a first item and a business rule for sale of the first item;

5 second means coupled to the first means via a network, the second means including:

the first document received from the first means; and

an online catalog including at least the information included in the first document; and

10 third means for accessing the online catalog in the second means, the third means being coupled to the second means via the network.

38. The system of claim 37, wherein the first document is an XML document and the information and the business rule are identified by XML tags.

39. The system of claim 37, further comprising fourth means for authoring a second 15 document comprising information descriptive of a second item and a business rule for sale of the second item, the fourth means being coupled to the second means via the network

40. The system of claim 39, wherein the second means further includes the second 20 document received from the fourth means and the online catalog includes at least a portion of the second document.

41. The system of claim 37, further comprising fourth means coupled to the second means via the network, the fourth computer including:

the first document received from the second computer; and

another online catalog including at least a portion of the first document.

25 42. A method for building a catalog, comprising:

sending a computer program for authoring an electronic document to a plurality of sellers;

receiving a plurality of documents from the sellers, each document including information about at least one product or service (hereinafter "item") offered for sale and a business rule governing sale of the item;

generating a catalog containing a group of documents, wherein a document from the plurality of documents received from the sellers is included in the catalog if at least a portion of the information or the business rule meets a predetermined criterion;

adding additional information or adding an additional rule prior to generating the catalog; and

distributing the catalog containing the information to a plurality of buyers.

43. The method of Claim 42 wherein:

information in a plurality of documents described an identical item offered for sale by a number of said sellers.